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**SRI LANKA**

## SUCCESS STORY

# Tamil and Muslim youth work together to support flood affected families in Sri Lanka

**Disaster response brings young people together after decades apart**



*Divided by bitter conflict for decades, Tamil and Muslim youth distribute mosquito nets and bed mats to flood affected families in Eravur, Batticaloa, with OTI support.*

***Young people trained under OTI grants volunteer with national organizations Sarvodaya and Alliance Development Trust, to distribute non-food relief items to flood-affected people in Batticaloa district, in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province.***

January 2011

60 young people from Batticaloa district, in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province, volunteered to distribute non-food relief items (NFRIs) supported by USAID to communities affected by the heavy rains that flooded the island in January.

The conflict that has so dominated this province for more than 30 years pitted communities against each other, often along ethnic lines. Tamil and Muslim communities in Batticaloa, torn apart by decades of violence and mistrust, were equally affected by the 40 days of heavy rain that have been visited upon the island since December.

Young men and women from Tamil and Muslim communities, some of whom are enrolled in USAID-supported training programs across the district, volunteered to work with each other to distribute NFRIs to key areas across Batticaloa. Many of the young people are from areas formerly under the control and influence of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and grew up with high levels of forcible recruitment, coercion and abductions.

Since the end of the conflict in 2009, these communities have started to enjoy the benefits of peace, with improved transportation facilities, freedom of association, and greater opportunities for livelihoods. Interacting with communities they have been separated from for so long has inspired cooperation. These young volunteers traveled to isolated areas, extending hands of friendship across ethnic lines and distributing much needed supplies to those still struggling to find their feet after the inundation.